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(Neue Perikopenreihe.)

Mark. 6, 17—29.

Die altkirchlichen Perikopen führen uns in der Adventszeit an mehreren Sonntagen das Bild Johannes des Täufers vor Augen, und mit vollem Recht. War er doch der Vorläufer Jesu, der unserm Herrn den Weg bereitete, dessen Gestalt darum ganz von selbst uns vor die Seele tritt, wenn wir, wie es in der Adventszeit geschieht, vom Kommen Jesu reden. Auch die neue Perikopenreihe will der Kirche Veranlassung geben, sich in dieser Zeit mit dem Leben und Wirken des großen Täufers zu beschäftigen, und legt uns darum für den dritten und vierten Sonntag im Advent Texte vor, die von dem gewaltigen Bußprediger, der mit seiner Botschaft von Sünde und Gnade dem kommenden Erlöser die Herzen öffnen sollte, handeln. Unser Abschnitt berichtet uns, wie dieser treue Zeuge der göttlichen Wahrheit den Märtyrertod starb.

B. 17. 18: „Er, Herodes, hatte nämlich gesandt und Johannes greifen und ihn in einem Gefängnis binden lassen wegen der Herodias, des Weibes seines Bruders Philipp; denn er hatte sie geheiratet. Es hatte nämlich Johannes zu Herodes gesagt: „Es ist dir nicht gestattet, das Weib deines Bruders zu haben.““ Markus hatte in den Versen, die unserm Abschnitt vorhergehen, berichtet, daß Herodes, auf Jesum aufmerksam geworden, die Vermutung ausgesprochen hatte: Johannes, den er enthauptet hatte, sei von den Toten auferstanden. Das machte nun eine nähere Mitteilung über den Tod des Johannes, wovon Markus bisher noch nichts gesagt hatte, nötig. Und so fügt der Evangelist diese Historie ein. Hiermit ist auch schon das „nämlich“ (das γὰρ ist hier nicht begründend, sondern explikativ) erklärt. Das αὐτός ist das betonte „er“, wozu als Apposition Herodes tritt (vgl. Blas-Debrunner, § 277). Luther hat demnach richtig übersetzt. Der Bedeutung und dem Gebrauch der griechischen Tempora gemäß findet sich hier das einfache Tempus der Erzählung, der Aorist, während nach dem deutschen Idiom in solchen nachträglich beigebrachten historischen Bemerkungen das Plusquamper-

sektum am Platze ist. Johannes der Täufer war bei seinem Wirken auch mit Herodes, dem ränkevollen, genußsüchtigen, grausamen, charakterlosen Tetrarchen Galiläas, in Berührung gekommen. Es war dies Herodes Antipas, ein Sohn Herodes des Großen und derselbe Fürst, vor dem Jesus in Jerusalem in den Stunden seines Leidens verspottet wurde. Er war in das Netz der herrschsüchtigen Herodias, der Gattin seines Bruders Herodes Philipp, der in Rom als Privatmann lebte und wohl unterschieden werden muß von dem Vierfürsten Philipp (Luk. 3, 2 u. a. erwähnt), geraten, als er einmal in Rom auf Besuch weilte, und hatte als „Dank“ für die genossene Gastfreundschaft des Bruders diesem sein Weib genommen. Seine rechtmäßige Gattin, mit der er schon viele Jahre in der Ehe gelebt hatte, die Tochter des Königs Aretas im steinichten Arabien, hörte davon, daß Herodes sich ein anderes Weib angeheiratet hätte, und floh, ohne das Eintreffen der Herodias abzuwarten, zurück zu ihrem Vater. In doppelter Hinsicht war es eine gottlose Ehe, in der Herodes und Herodias lebten: letztere war nicht bloß die Schwägerin, sondern auch die Michte des Herodes. Dazu kam die Tat des Ehebruchs. Johannes hatte dieses verruchte Treiben nicht mit Stillschweigen angesehen, sondern hatte dem Herodes freimütig erklärt, die Ehe mit Herodias sei gegen Gottes Gebot (*ὁὐκ ἔστιν*). Die näheren Umstände dieses Zeugnisses für die Autorität des sechsten Gebots wird uns nicht erzählt. Möglich ist, daß Herodes bei seinen Reisen durch sein Land (Galiläa und Peräa) auf Johannes stieß und dann aus dessen Mund die vernichtende Kritik seiner ehelichen Verhältnisse entgegennehmen mußte. Übrigens hat ihm Johannes bei diesen Gelegenheiten nicht bloß seinen Ehebruch, sondern auch seine vielen andern Schandtaten vorgehalten, wie aus Luk. 3, 19 ersichtlich ist. Als unerschrockener Zeuge für die ewige, unveränderliche Wahrheit tritt Johannes hier vor uns hin, indem er einen Fürsten, der ihn auf der Stelle durch seine Schergen hinmorden lassen konnte, auf seine Sünden hinweist. Welch ein Beispiel für uns, die wir gerade den Mächtigen in Kirche und Staat wohl gerne schmeicheln, aber ihnen die Wahrheit zu sagen häufig unterlassen, selbst wenn es die Pflicht gebietet! Herodias muß von dieser Bestrafung durch den Täufer gehört und ihm dann Rache geschworen haben. Auf ihr Drängen — denn so ist nach dem Verlauf der ganzen Erzählung das *διὰ Ἡεροδιάδα*, wegen der Herodias, zu verstehen — hatte Herodes den großen Propheten Gottes greifen und gebunden ins Gefängnis legen lassen. Daß man sich damals oft nicht mit dem bloßen Einsperren begnügte, sondern den Gefangenen noch Ketten oder anderes die Bewegung Hinderndes anlegte, zeigt die Erzählung von Paulus und Silas im Kerker zu Philippi, Apost. 16. Manche Ausleger sind allerdings der Meinung, daß die tadelnden Worte des Johannes gesprochen wurden, nachdem er ins Gefängnis gelegt worden war. Als Grund für seine Einkerkelung nehmen sie dann, dem Bericht des Josephus folgend, an, daß Herodes gefürchtet habe, die Popularität des

Johannes und der Andrang des Volkes zu ihm könnten ernste politische Unruhen herbeiführen. Es läßt sich allerdings auch diese Annahme zur Not mit dem Bericht der Evangelisten vereinigen. Doch ist der erste Eindruck, der durch ihre Darstellung hervorgerufen wird, ein anderer. Möglich ist dies, daß bei Herodes beides bestimmend wirkte: das Hängen des gottlosen Weibes und die Furcht vor Aufruhr des Volkes, das etwa unter der Leitung des Johannes das Joch des Tyrannen abzuschütteln versuchen würde. Die Evangelisten berichten nicht, wo Johannes gefangengehalten wurde. Wir haben keinen Grund, den Bericht des Josephus in Zweifel zu ziehen, der die Burg Machärus ganz im Süden von Peräa, östlich vom Toten Meer, am Rand der Wüste gelegen, als den Ort des Gefängnisses nennt.

B. 19. 20: „Herodias trug ihm dies nach und wollte ihn töten und konnte es nicht. Denn Herodes fürchtete Johannes, da er ihn als einen rechtschaffenen und heiligen Mann kannte, und er bewahrte ihn, und wenn er ihn gehört hatte, war er sehr bekümmert, und gerne hörte er ihm zu.“ Bei *εὐεῖχεν* ergänzt man, wie Weiß in Meyers Kommentar zu dieser Stelle ausführt, am besten als Objekt ein Pronomen, das zurückweist auf die Worte des Johannes. Herodias befehlt die Zurechtweisung im Gedächtnis, voller Ingrimm über den kühnen Propheten. Ihr Verlangen, ihn sofort töten zu lassen, scheiterte an der Stellung des Herodes, der bei all seinem Leichtsinn und seiner Mißachtung göttlicher Gebote doch den Johannes fürchtete, wohl in der Meinung, wenn er diesen frommen Mann hinrichte, könne ihn selbst Unheil treffen. So bewahrte er ihn, das heißt, er beschützte ihn gegen die Rache der Herodias. Über die richtige Lesart in B. 20b, ob nämlich *ἐπολεῖ* oder *ἠπόρει* das Ursprüngliche sei, gehen die Meinungen auseinander. Unsere besten Codices (A, B, L) bieten die letztere Form. Und weil diese außerdem die schwierigere Lesart ist, können wir sie wohl für richtig halten. Herodes war sehr bekümmert, wenn er Johannes gehört hatte. Er ließ ihn demnach wiederholt kommen und predigen. Johannes benutzte die Gelegenheit jedesmal, ihm den Stachel des Gesetzes wieder in das Gewissen zu drücken, so daß den Tyrannen Angst ergriff über seine Sünden. Leider war die Bewegung immer nur eine oberflächliche und vorübergehende. Daß er trotz der ernsten Worte des Johannes ihn gern hörte, ist psychologisch leicht zu erklären. Es gibt Menschen, die es gewissermaßen für eine Sühne ansehen, wenn die Sünden, denen sie ergeben sind, in ihrer Gegenwart vom Prediger gezeigelt werden. Das Gefühl der Unruhe, das sie ergreift, halten sie für eine Art Buße, und aus der Zustimmung, die sie innerlich und vielleicht auch äußerlich dem Prediger zuteil werden lassen, ziehen sie den Schluß, daß sie doch nicht so ganz schlechte Menschen seien. Auch mag die feurige Beredsamkeit des Johannes dem Herodes so imponiert haben, daß er ihm gerne lauschte. Weiß behauptet übrigens, daß Markus sich hier in direktem Widerspruch mit Matthäus befinde, da letzterer Matth. 14, 5 sagt, daß Herodes den

Johannes töten wollte. Aber die Lösung dieser Scheindifferenz liegt doch auf der Hand. Allerdings wollte Herodes den Johannes umbringen und hätte ihn viel lieber tot als lebend gesehen. Daß er ihn nicht sofort hinhängen ließ, kam wahrlich nicht von großer Liebe zu Johannes her, sondern hatte seinen Grund lediglich in der Furcht, von der die Evangelisten berichten. Stimmt dies nicht mit der Stellung so vieler Weltkinder heutzutage, die zwar äußerlich die Kirche unterstützen, innerlich aber dem Evangelium gram sind und es am liebsten abgeschafft sehen würden?

B. 21—23: „Und als ein gelegener Tag gekommen war, als [nämlich] Herodes an seinem Geburtstag seinen Mächtigen und Heeresobersten und den angesehensten Männern Galiläas ein Mahl bereitet hatte und die Tochter der Herodias selbst hereinkam und tanzte, gefiel dies dem Herodes und den mit ihm an der Tafel Liegenden. Und der König sprach zu dem Mädchen: Bitte mich, um was auch immer du willst, und ich werde es dir geben; und er schwur ihr: Wenn du mich bittest, werde ich dir geben bis zur Hälfte meines Königreichs.“ Wohlenberg sagt treffend: „Nun erst beginnt die eigentliche Geschichte von der Hinrichtung des Täufers, mit bewundernswerter Erzählerkunst, spannend, dramatisch vorgetragen, wieder viel breiter und anschaulicher als bei Matthäus.“ Herodias verstand die Kunst des Wartens. Aufgehoben war bei ihr nicht aufgehoben. Eine günstige Gelegenheit zur Ausführung ihres Racheplanes gegen Johannes kam, als der König in Gegenwart seiner Hauptbeamten und -offiziere und der hohen Aristokratie Galiläas seinen Geburtstag feierte. Nachdem Herodes und seine Gäste weidlich gegessen und getrunken hatten, mußte die Tochter der Herodias aus ihrer Ehe mit Herodes Philipp — nach Josephus hieß sie Salome — einen Tanz aufführen. Man hat gemeint, dieser Zug der Erzählung sei erdichtet; eine vornehme junge Dame hätte sich nicht für so etwas hergegeben. In Familien, wo Sitte und Anstand herrschte, allerdings nicht; aber im Kreise des Herodes und seines ehebrecherischen Weibes setzte man sich über alle Schranken fest hinweg. Daß der Tanz unzüchtiger Art war, können wir wohl annehmen als der Gewohnheit gemäß, die damals bei den weltlich gesinnten Reichen und Vornehmen eingerissen war. Der Plan der Herodias war, den König in solche gute Laune zu bringen, daß er schier irgend etwas versprechen würde. Die List gelang. Herodes, vom Wein erhitzt, von den Reizen seiner Nichte und Stieftochter betört, bindet sich mit einem feierlichen, wiederholt ausgesprochenen Schwur (siehe den Plural, B. 26), ihr alles zu geben, um was sie bitten würde, bis zur Hälfte seines Königreichs. So schwört er in einer völlig ungewissen Sache. Daß dies mit der Heiligkeit eines Eidschwurs nicht vereinbar war, kann jeder erkennen. Hier sieht man aber auch, welche schrecklichen Folgen diese Art Eide haben kann. Halten wir daher daran fest, daß der Eid in ungewissen Dingen, wie ihn z. B. die Loge verlangt, etwas Unmoralisches und Gefährliches ist.

B. 24. 25: „Und sie ging hinaus und sagte zu ihrer Mutter: Um was soll ich bitten? Sie sagte: Um das Haupt Johannis des Tausenden. Und gleich ging sie hurtig hinein zum König und bat: Ich will, daß du mir ohne weiteres auf einer Schüssel das Haupt Johannis des Täufers gebeest.“ Das Mädchen — der Ausdruck *νοτάσιον*, B. 22, braucht nicht gerade auf ein ganz junges Kind hinzuweisen — hatte gewiß von der Mutter die Instruktion erhalten, sich gegebenenfalls bei ihr Rat zu holen. So ging sie zu ihr hinaus und fragte: „Um was soll ich bitten?“ (conjunctivus deliberativus). Die entmenschte Mutter hat die Antwort längst bereit und teilt sie der Tochter mit. Frech, fast stürmt das Mädchen zurück und stellt die schreckliche Forderung, daß ihr das Haupt des Täufers auf einer Schüssel gereicht werde. Schüsseln von edlem Metall standen auf der Tafel. Das Mädchen verlangt, daß auch ihr eine Schüssel gereicht werde; aber das Haupt des Täufers soll darin sein. Die Hoffnung der Herodias ist, daß der König das, was er ihr in Stunden kühler Überlegung abgeschlagen hat, jetzt im Weinrausch der Tochter gewähren werde, besonders da er sich durch einen Eid gebunden hatte.

B. 28. 29: „Und obwohl der König hoch betrübt ward, wollte er doch wegen der Eidschwüre und wegen derer, die an der Tafel lagen, sie nicht abweisen. Und sofort sandte der König einen Leibgardisten und trug ihm auf, sein [des Johannes] Haupt zu bringen. Und er ging weg und enthauptete ihn in dem Gefängnis und brachte sein Haupt auf einer Schüssel und gab es dem Mädchen, und das Mädchen gab es ihrer Mutter. Und als seine Jünger hiervon gehört hatten, kamen sie und nahmen seinen Leichnam und legten ihn in ein Grab.“ Jetzt fallen dem König gleichsam Schuppen von den Augen. Erschrocken hört er die schaurige Forderung an. Sein Gewissen sagt ihm, daß er zum Mörder werde, wenn er diese Bitte erfülle. Die Furcht, die ihn bisher davon abgehalten hatte, Johannes umzubringen, stellt sich mit Macht ein. Ob ihm nicht sein Gewissen gesagt hat, einen gottlosen Eid wie den, den er abgelegt hatte, zu halten, bedeute nur, zu einer Sünde noch eine andere hinzuzufügen? Aber andererseits stellte er sich vor, daß er vor all seinen Großen und vor der Herodias und ihrer Tochter als wortbrüchiger Schwächling dastehen würde, wenn er die Bitte abschläge. Und die Eitelkeit gewinnt den Sieg. Anstatt dem Mädchen zuzurufen, sie solle sich schleunigst zurückziehen, er hätte ihres üblen Spieles jetzt übergenug, anstatt dem Geheiß Gottes und seinem Gewissen zu folgen, gibt er einem seiner Leibwache (speculator, ein lateinisches Wort, das Markus herübergenommen hat) den Auftrag, das Haupt des Täufers zu holen. Die Soldaten der Leibwache hatten neben andern Diensten auch die graufige Funktion, Hinrichtungen zu vollziehen. Der Auftrag wird gleich ausgeführt. Ederseim sagt, den Johannes betreffend: „No time for preparation was given, none was needed.“ Das Haupt wird gebracht; die unzüchtigen Weiber nehmen es in Empfang und werden

damit ihren Spott getrieben haben. Der Tanz der Salome hat das Leben dessen gekostet, der auch mehr war als ein Prophet. Traurig kommen die Jünger des Johannes und tragen den Leichnam ihres großen Meisters zu Grabe. So hauchte der gewaltige Herold des Messias seine Seele aus. Traurig und doch herrlich! Er war getreu bis an den Tod — gibt es etwas Größeres? Die Worte, die ein anderer Gewaltiger im Reich Gottes etwa fünfunddreißig Jahre später in ganz ähnlicher Lage schrieb, hätte auch er sprechen können: „Ich habe einen guten Kampf gekämpft; ich habe den Lauf vollendet; ich habe Glauben gehalten. Hinfort ist mir beigelegt die Krone der Gerechtigkeit“, 2 Tim. 4, 7. 8.

Der Abventszeit gemäß sollte vor allen Dingen, wenn über diesen Text gepredigt wird, Johannes als Zeuge der Wahrheit, in welcher Eigenschaft er dem Heiland den Weg bereitete, der Gemeinde vorgestellt werden. Doch bietet der Abschnitt auch sonst noch viel Material für Predigten. In den folgenden Themata habe ich versucht, sowohl den Abvent Charakter des Textes wie auch andere Gesichtspunkte, die sich dem Homileten darbieten, zu berücksichtigen. — Johannes ein rechter Abventsprediger. 1. Er predigte das Gesetz und zerfnirschte so die stolzen Herzen, die den Messias nicht haben wollten; 2. er war der Täufer und brachte als solcher den Armen Sündern die Vergebung Gottes durch das Werk des Messias. — Johannes ein großer Zeuge Jesu Christi: 1. in seiner Predigt; 2. in seinem Leben. — Wozu mahnt uns das Beispiel Johannis des Täufers? 1. Unsern Glauben ohne Menschenfurcht zu bekennen; 2. standhaft zu bleiben bis ans Ende. — Johannes ein zweiter Elias. 1. Wie der alte Elias war er ein gewaltiger, unerschrockener Bußprediger. 2. Wie jener mußte er viel Trübsal erleiden. — Eine Warnung vor Sünden wider das sechste Gebot: 1. vor dem eigentlichen Ehebruch; 2. vor unzüchtigem Wandel überhaupt (Tanz). — Inwiefern ist der jetzt übliche Tanz gleich dem der Salome? 1. Er ist unzüchtig. 2. Er führt häufig zu andern Sünden. — Warum sind Eide in ungewissen Dingen zu verwerfen? 1. Sie entsprechen nicht der Heiligkeit des Eidschwures und sind also eine Entheiligung des Namens Gottes. 2. Sie bringen oft diejenigen, die sie ablegen, in große Not. — Was soll der Christ tun, wenn er durch einen Eid in einer ungewissen Sache geschworen hat, eine Sünde zu begehen? 1. Er soll das Sündliche eines solchen Eides erkennen und Buße tun für seine Sünde. 2. Er soll den Eid als ungültig beiseitelegen.

Predigtentwurf über Matth. 1, 18—25.

(Neue Perikopenreihe I. — Erster Weihnachtstag.)

Weihnachten die Zeit der Geschenke. Im besten Fall nur geringe Abbilder des großen Geschenke, wodurch Weihnachten erst seine Bedeutung erhält, des Geschenke Gottes an die Menschen. Manches Geschenk in unscheinbare Hülle eingewickelt, so daß man keinen Schluß auf den Inhalt machen kann. So ist auch die äußere Umhüllung des Geschenke Gottes eine geringe, unansehnliche. Manches Kind, durch äußeren Schein verleitet, läßt ein kostbares Geschenk wegen seiner schlichten Hülle liegen und greift nach einem in glänzenden Blitter gewickelten, sonst völlig wertlosen Geschenk. So tun es die meisten Menschen mit Gottes Geschenk. Freilich haben sie keine Entschuldigung, denn Gott hat klar und deutlich mit großen Buchstaben den Inhalt des Pakets auf die Hülle geschrieben. So in unserm Text.

Das Weihnachtsgeschenk Gottes an die Menschheit: Immanuel.

1. Der fleischgewordene Gottessohn;
2. der gottgesandte Sünderheiland.

1.

a. Die ärmliche Hülle. Ein wahres Menschenkind, eingetragene in menschliche Geschlechtsregister, Matth. 1, 16; Maria seine Mutter, B. 18; auf dem Wege der Schwangerschaft, B. 18. 20. 21, und Geburt, B. 21. 25, als erster Sohn der Maria, B. 25, auf die Welt gekommen; noch dazu in großer Armut und Niedrigkeit; in Bindeln gewickelt, lag es in einer Krippe, Luf. 2, 7. Noch unscheinbarer wird die Hülle. Auch dies Kind scheint wie andere Kinder in Sünden geboren zu sein, ist es doch der Sohn einer sündlichen Mutter. Ja, die Mutter kommt um dieser Schwangerschaft willen in gar üblen Verdacht bei ihrem Verlobten, der sie als vermeintlich Gefallene zwar nicht öffentlich an den Pranger stellen, aber doch heimlich verlassen will. Welch geringe, schier verächtliche Hülle!

b. Der köstliche Inhalt. Auf dieser unansehnlichen Hülle steht geschrieben: „Immanuel.“ In unserm Text löst Matthäus die äußere Umhüllung ein wenig und läßt uns den köstlichen Inhalt schauen. B. 20. „Sohn Davids, erinnerst du dich nicht an die Verheißung von dem Davidssohn, der auf dem Stuhl seines königlichen Vaters sitzen soll, 2 Sam. 7, 12; der nicht nur Davids Sohn, sondern auch sein Herr sein sollte, Ps. 110; der gerade von einer Jungfrau geboren werden sollte, Jes. 7, 14? Diese Weissagung geht nun in Erfüllung.“ Ja, dies Menschenkind, Marien Sohn, ist kein gewöhnliches Kind, sondern Jungfrauensohn, der Weibesame, Gen. 3, 15, geboren von einem Weibe, Gal. 4, 4; und zwar ohne Zutun eines Mannes, aus Kraft des Heiligen Geistes, B. 20; Luf. 1, 35. überhaupt nicht ein bloßes Menschenkind, sondern Gottes eigenes Kind, Immanuel, B. 23; Jes. 9, 6;

Jer. 23, 6; Joh. 1, 14; Kol. 2, 9. Eben darum sündlos, fleckenlos, wie Gott selbst, Luk. 1, 35. Der Heilige Geist sonderte aus dem sündlich vererbten Fleisch und Blut der Maria einen Teil aus, den er durch seine Allmachtswirkung zu einer sündlosen Menschennatur heiligte, und im selben Augenblick vereinigte sich dort im Mutterleib Marias mit dieser durch den Heiligen Geist ins Dasein gerufenen Menschennatur der Sohn Gottes selbst. So sagt es der Evangelist, so sagt es der Prophet, so sagt es der Engel, so sagt es der Herr selbst: Dies Kind ist Immanuel. Mögen Ungläubige spotten, wir wissen: Luk. 1, 37. Wie Gott nicht nur auf natürliche, sondern auch auf übernatürliche Weise das Leben erhalten kann, 2 Mos. 34, 28; 1 Kön. 19, 8, so kann er, der als Schöpfer nicht an die Naturgesetze gebunden ist, auch auf übernatürliche Weise das Leben ins Dasein rufen. Der erste und zweite Adam sind in dieser Beziehung sich ähnlich. Darum glauben wir: Hier ist Immanuel! und jauchzen: Lied 30, B. 1.

2.

a. Er rettet von Sünden. Dieser Immanuel ist der Christus, B. 18, der von Gott selbst zu einem bestimmten Werk Eingesezte und Gesalbte. Dies Werk? Er soll Jesus heißen, B. 21. 25. Heiland, Seligmacher. Zu diesem Werk ist er geeignet — oder sollte Gott sich einen Ungeeigneten ansehen haben? Er rettet uns auf die einzig mögliche Weise, durch Stellvertretung, die er allein leisten konnte. Als sündloser Gottmensch bezahlt er die Sündenschuld, Jes. 53, 6. 11. 12; Joh. 1, 29; 2 Kor. 5, 21; büßt die Sündenstrafe, Jes. 53; Gal. 3, 13; zerstört die Sündenherrschaft, 1 Petr. 1, 18; erfüllt das Gesetz vollkommen, Gal. 4, 4. 5; ist in Tat und Wahrheit Jesus, der von Sünden in jeder Beziehung rettet, selig macht, die Kindschaft erwirbt.

b. Der Retter seines Volks. Er ist der Heiland aller Menschen, Joh. 1, 29; Matth. 18, 11; Röm. 5, 18; sonderlich aber der Gläubigen. Er wird „sein Volk“ selig machen, B. 21; das sind eben die Gläubigen, die durch den Glauben diesen von Gott ihnen geschenkten Sünderheiland annehmen, sich seiner freuen und damit in den Besitz und Genuß der von ihm erworbenen Sündenfreiheit und Seligkeit eintreten. Denen ist er auch Immanuel, Gott mit uns. Will Satan ihnen das Gewissen heiß machen, er tröstet sie, Lied 20; B. 10, 13. Will Welt und Fleisch sie locken, er flößt ihnen Kraft ein, die Versuchungen zu überwinden und zu sagen: Lied 37, 2. Werden sie müde unter der Last des Kreuzes, er erquickt sie, Lied 39, 10—13. In der Todesstunde: Lied 16, 6. Wahrlich, er wird sein Volk selig machen von ihren Sünden. Herrliches Geschenk!

c. Der einige Heiland. Er ist Christus, der einige Heiland, den Gott ausersehen hat. Wer nicht durch ihn selig werden will, muß es bleiben lassen. Das schreckliche Los der Rotte Korahs, die den von Gott gesekten Hohenpriester verachteten, sollte alle schrecken.

Darum nicht sich stoßen an der äußeren geringen Hülle, in der uns dies Gottesgeschenk dargeboten wird. Nicht sich stoßen daran, daß dies Geschenk dort in Bindeln gewickelt ist und in einer Krippe liegt, ein kleines Menschenkind. Nicht sich stoßen daran, daß noch heute dies Geschenk nicht unverhüllt dargeboten wird, sondern in der Hülle des Wortes. Wohl sind es Menschen, die dies Wort geschrieben haben: Matthäus, Jesaias; wohl ist es ein sündiger Mensch, der dir es heute verkündigt; aber hier wie dort, in der Krippe wie im Wort, ist es Immanuel, der fleischgewordene Gottessohn, Immanuel, der gottgesandte Sünderheiland. Nehmen wir dies Geschenk an, halten wir es fest, dann kommt der Tag, da es nicht mehr verhüllt, sondern von Angesicht zu Angesicht gesehen wird, Lied 37, 4.

T. h. L.

Sermons for the Season of Advent.

IS. 61, 1—3.

Jesus Christ is not only the King of kings and the Priest of priests, He is also the Prophet of prophets. Speaking of prophets, we stop to inquire into the meaning of this term. A prophet is a man sent by God with a message from God for the people. Jesus Christ was such a man. With reference to Him God said unto Moses concerning Israel: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I have commanded Him."

But how do we know that this prophecy was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ? When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, the voice of the Father came down from heaven, saying: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, the same words resounded from heaven, with the addition, however: "Hear ye Him."

Jesus Christ is to be heard. The Father who sent Him demands it. It follows, then, that Jesus had a message from God for the people, that He is a Prophet. Indeed, He is more than that—He is *the* Prophet or, in other words, the Prophet of prophets. This truth is further emphasized by Christ Himself in our text. Accordingly, then, we shall choose for the subject of our discussion:—

JESUS CHRIST THE PROPHET OF PROPHETS.

And we shall notice that He holds this distinction

1. *By virtue of His superior person and authority;*
2. *By virtue of the fact that He Himself is the essence of His message.*

1.

We read in the text: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach." These are words of Christ which He spoke by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah seven hundred years before His appearance in the flesh. Should any one be inclined to doubt the truth of this statement, let him consult the fourth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. There we find that Jesus, at the beginning of His public ministry, entered the synagog at Nazareth, opened the Book of Isaiah, and read that portion of it which constitutes our text, and that, having read it, He turned to His audience and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

"The Lord hath anointed Me to preach," says Christ in our text. Now, how are we, who firmly believe that the preacher is Himself the Lord, to understand these words? There is a problem here, it is true; but its solution is not so hard as it may seem. Jesus Christ is God. There is no doubt about that in the mind of a Christian. But He is God *manifested in the flesh*. He who was God from eternity became man in time, in the fulness of time, as the apostle puts it, being made of a woman, namely, the Virgin Mary. Jesus Christ is therefore both true God and true man. He has both a divine and a human nature. And in the text He merely states that the divine prerogative to give doctrines to men, which was His from eternity, is now given, transferred, also to His human nature.

God's people of old had many prophets, not many at one time, but in the course of time. Two things were required of a man before the people were to receive and honor him as a prophet—he must be God-sent, and he must have a divine message. There were those who undertook to prophesy and preach without having received a divine commission. God was highly displeased with them, as His words show. He said concerning some of them: "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied." The first and foremost prophet of Old Testament times was Moses. He was both sent by God and equipped for his office. "Like unto" Moses was Christ.

"The *Lord* hath anointed Me to preach," says Christ. There you have His divine commission. "Hear ye Him," says the Father. This proves that He had a divine message. Jesus Christ, then, is in every way entitled to the appellation "prophet."

But He was to be more than a mere prophet. He was to stand at the head of them all. To distinguish Him from all the rest and to set forth His superiority, He was anointed with the Holy Ghost. It was customary in ancient days to anoint kings and priests for their respective offices. But only in one instance do we read that a prophet was thus distinguished. 1 Kings 19, 16. Such anointing

was done with oil. This oil, at best, only symbolized the Holy Spirit. Jesus, however, was anointed with the Holy Ghost Himself, in order that He might be set apart from all other prophets as well as from the kings and priests. In our text, Jesus testifies to the fact that He was anointed with the Holy Ghost. We also learn from the Bible when this divine unction was administered unto Him. It was after His incarnation, namely, on the day of His baptism, when, as we are told by two of the evangelists, "the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him," so that He returned from the Jordan "full of the Holy Ghost."

Thus we see that Jesus Christ is what the Bible claims for Him, *the Prophet*. While other prophets were mere men, and yet prophets indeed by virtue of their divine commission, Jesus Christ, in addition to holding the same commission, is the God-man, the eternal Son of the Father, in possession of all the divine attributes, with power to exercise them at all times. While in the case of all other prophets the Holy Spirit spoke through them only at intervals, as God did choose, the Prophet Jesus Christ was at all times in full possession of the Holy Ghost, and thus every word He spoke was an utterance of truth coming directly from the Father's heart. Truly, beloved, He who was in the bosom of the Father from eternity, He who is Himself God, blessed forever, He who in the flesh is in full possession of the Holy Ghost, He cannot be less than the Prophet of prophets.

Let us, then, receive Him as such, my friends; let us rejoice in Him with sincere gratitude to God, who sent Him to preach also to us. Let us hear Him. None other is better qualified to speak with authority in all matters of importance to us for this life and the next. Considering who He is and what He is able to do for us, should we not *gladly* lend our ears to His voice and open our hearts and minds to His blessed teachings?

But where can we hear Him? The Prophet of prophets speaks to us now in the Bible. Reading the Bible, we receive His message. It is for this reason also that He exhorts us to *search the Scriptures*. Christ speaks to us also by the mouth of every minister of the Gospel who proclaims the doctrines of the Bible in all their truth and purity. To such preachers He says: "He that heareth you heareth Me."

2.

Indeed, friends, the message of the Prophet of prophets deserves attention not only because it is the Word of Him who speaks with absolute authority, but also because of the fact that He Himself is the essence of His message. In other words, in His message Christ gives Himself.

In our text, Jesus Himself describes the nature of His message.

He says: "The Lord hath anointed Me to preach *good tidings*." Christ's message is the Gospel, the good news of the grace of God as it has revealed itself in Him, Christ. Jesus states in our text that He is sent "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord," that is, a time of grace for all sinners, made possible by the fact that God took vengeance on the enemies of man's soul when His only-begotten Son met them in combat and defeated them. This battle was fought on Calvary and during the days leading up to it.

Specifying, Jesus teaches that He is sent to "proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Notice that the Lord is here not referring to such as are deprived of their temporal freedom, such as the slaves and those confined in a penitentiary. He is not speaking of bodily bondage, but of spiritual misery. True, He has compassion also on those in bodily and temporal needs, and many are the miracles He performed to alleviate such afflictions. He cast out devils, for instance, and broke the hold which disease had taken on many that were sick. But that was not His chief task. Sent to atone for the sins of all men as their great High Priest, He has come as the Prophet to tell them so. He came to inform all those who are held in the bondage of Satan and sin — and in this pitiable plight all men lay since the Fall — that the fetters are broken and the prison-doors open. These He would by His message transfer from the kingdom of Satan into His Kingdom of Grace that they might enjoy the remission of sins and be eternally saved.

Then there are the "meek," the "broken-hearted," and they "that mourn in Zion," that is, in the Christian Church. For them also the good tidings of the Prophet of prophets are intended. All the Christians everywhere will need His glorious message as long as they dwell in the flesh. And what shall it do for them? Hear and marvel! It shall "bind up the broken-hearted," "comfort all that mourn," "give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." The Christians, too, are still subject to spiritual affliction. There are temptations, transgressions, remorse of conscience, contrition of heart. But Christ's message shall be their healing balm.

My friends, do your sins trouble you? Does the knowledge of their presence have a depressing effect upon you? Does your conscience smite you? Are you sick at heart? Remember, this misery need not be. Only give ear to the message of Jesus, which says: My blood cleanses you from all your sins. This message will heal your broken heart. It will make you look beautiful to yourself and to your God. It will clothe you with a righteousness that cannot be surpassed, the spotless robe of Christ's own merits. It will strengthen your floundering faith in the promises of the Gospel. It will make

you genuinely and permanently happy, so that your heart will pour forth gratitude and praise in words and deeds. If you have been slothful in the Master's business, if you have shirked your duty toward your congregation, your Synod, and its soul-saving mission; if you have been amiss in your duties as parent, child, spouse, neighbor, and citizen, the message of the Prophet of prophets will help you to grow and persevere in godliness and good works. Christ came to preach good tidings to men "that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." Giving ear to Christ's message, you shall be as a tree that is planted by the river of waters and which bringeth forth its fruit in due season. The more you listen to Jesus, the more will your whole life become like unto His, the more will the Lord be glorified in you and through you.

And what is it that gives the message of Christ this soul-converting, faith-reviving, and strengthening power? It is Christ Himself, who is the essence of His message. His words can open the dungeon in which the soul of man is by nature confined, because He, the Conqueror of the keeper of that prison, offers and imparts Himself in and through them. Christ's message can break the fetters of sin that hold the soul securely bound, because He who atoned for all sins gives Himself in and through it. Christ's good tidings can save to the uttermost, because in them comes to us the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world. Christ's Gospel can mightily stir the heart to faith and action, because His Holy Spirit is the converting power in it. Christ, then, is indeed the Prophet of prophets. While all other preachers must point to One outside of themselves as the Savior of men, Christ alone can point to Himself and say: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Preaching to men, He imparts Himself to men with all His merits and blessings.

Friends, may we learn to know the Prophet of prophets and to appreciate Him and His glorious message more and more day by day! May we daily recline at His feet, our ears and hearts attuned to His message! May we do this gladly! Verily, we shall never regret it. Already here in this life we shall then be of all men most happy and blessed, and in yonder life our joy shall know no bounds. May the Lord grant us His grace to this end for Jesus' sake. Amen.

IS. 61, 4—6.

God's only-begotten Son is man's Redeemer. He who is one with the Father from eternity took upon Himself the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of man, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death in order that as man's Substitute He

might meet the demands of God's holy Law for man, atone for his sins, and reconcile him again to God. Christ's redeeming work for man reached its climax in His innocent suffering and death on the cross of Calvary. There God's Son, our great High Priest, Himself became the Sacrifice, giving Himself a ransom for all men.

And in order that men might be informed concerning their redemption and brought to accept it in faith, our divine High Priest assumed the office also of a Prophet. In His Gospel, during His sojourn on earth proclaimed freely by Himself, now recorded in the Bible and preached by faithful ministers of the Gospel, He seeks to apprise men of the wonderful fact that there is in store for them all forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

His preaching was not in vain. Nor shall His Word ever return to Him void. Hearing the Gospel, men everywhere shall come to faith in their Savior. Men, women, and children shall be moved by His Gospel to consecrate themselves, body, soul, and all they possess, to Him.

Our text, my friends, offers us a splendid opportunity to speak on some of the fruits of Gospel-preaching. In plain words it answers the question:—

**WHAT WILL CHRIST'S MESSAGE DO FOR THOSE WHO
RECEIVE IT?**

1. *It will bless them with high honors.*
2. *It will make them builders for Christ.*

1.

We read in our text: "But ye shall be named the priests of the Lord; men shall call you the ministers of our God."

According to these words those who receive the Gospel which Christ proclaims, and which, in turn, imparts Christ and His merits to all who believe it, shall be highly honored before God and men. God shall call them His priests, and among men they shall be known as God's ministers.

No doubt, the people to whom this promise was first made considered it an honor to be numbered among the priesthood. The priesthood as they knew it was an order which culminated in the high priest and whose special function was to draw near to God in the Tabernacle, to obtain from Him pardon and blessings for their brethren, to offer up sacrifices and burn incense, to have the care of the Sanctuary and perform the multitudinous duties arising therefrom. Chiefly the priest of that time stood in a mediatorial relation between God and man and enjoyed the privilege and sacred duty of teaching God's Law to the people. Surely all the believers at that time would gladly have served in this capacity; but it could not be.

The honor was then reserved to a select few of the tribe of Levi and of the descendants of Aaron.

Now, however, Jesus Christ, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, tells them that the time shall come when all barriers to the realization of their hopes in this direction shall be removed, when all believers, without regard to human descent, bodily fitness, age, or sex, shall be admitted to the priesthood, have free access to God, enjoy the privileges of offering up sacrifices upon His altar, of interceding in behalf of each other and all men at the Throne of Mercy, of performing the duties in connection with the general care of the Church, and of teaching God's Word to men. How the hearts of those people must have throbbed with a feeling of joy and thanksgiving upon hearing these words! How they must have longed and sighed for the time to come when they, too, would be named "priests of the Lord," that is, the servants of Him who fills heaven and earth, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, — the time when they might serve God day and night in His Temple in the face of all men, when all men would be compelled to recognize them as the ministers of God!

This time came, beloved, when Jesus entered the world, lived and died for the purpose that a new order might be established on earth and that new and better things might replace the old. The priesthood, heretofore enjoyed by the tribe of Levi alone, with its sacrifices and intercessions and duties, was but a type of Him, the Christ; it was the shadow of things to come. Now that the body has appeared, the shadow must vanish. When Jesus died on the cross, thus bringing the sacrifice for men to which the sacrifices of beasts in ancient days had pointed; when thus He performed the office of the divine High Priest, of whom the priests of the Old Testament were but types, then, as we are told in the Bible, "the veil in the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." And we know that this miracle was meant to signify that henceforth and forever all men, on the basis of Christ's redemptive work for them, should be entitled to the right of entering the Holy Place, heretofore reserved to the priests, and should be known as priests and ministers of the Lord.

Dear hearers, we are living in the time whose coming is foretold in our text. The exalted position coveted by the believers of old we are occupying; the honor desired by them we are enjoying. St. Peter writes to the Christians: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood" (mark the words: "a royal priesthood"), "an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." He who has called us is God, whom to serve is indeed a pleasure and an honor. We are His priests. He has given us the prerogative once enjoyed by the Levites.

Truly, God has honored us above the priests of old. Their service of Him was restricted, hedged in by numerous laws prescribing its time and manner. We are not so handicapped. We may at any time of the day or night enter into the presence of the Lord without fear of being consumed by His wrath; for we are clothed in the priestly robe of the righteousness of His own Son. We may at any time intercede for ourselves and our fellow-men, deposit upon God's altar our sacrifices, the gifts of our love and gratitude, and we may ever engage in the work that tends to keep and to enlarge His Church on earth. We are in the full sense of the word the priests of the Lord, as all the world must admit. All men, although many may do it sneeringly and with malice, must say: "These are the ministers of God."

Behold how highly the Lord has exalted us, not, of course, because of any merits of our own or of any worthiness in us, but because of the merits of His own beloved Son, which have been appropriated to us through faith. To Him who died for us on Calvary we owe the elevated position we hold in the Church.

And the good tidings of Christ's message have made us what we are. May we never forget the debt of gratitude we owe to Jesus for His precious Gospel! On the contrary, may we, in gratitude to God for His grace, ever be found willing to present our bodies living sacrifices unto God and to spread abroad in all the world the Gospel of Jesus, so that it may do also for others what it has done for us.

2.

It is the will of the Lord that, having been converted by the Gospel and elevated to the priesthood, we should become builders for Christ. Our text reads: "And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations." Thus we see that God does not call us to Himself and does not bless us with lofty titles in order that we may live a life of ease and act the parts of drones, but that we should be workers, builders, reclaimers.

The people whom the Lord addresses in our text were soon to be carried away to Babylon, together with all that they had laid up in store (Is. 39), and they were to remain in captivity for seventy years. After that they were to return to their own country, but only to find it desolate and their cities and homes in ruins. They were, however, to reclaim the waste places and to rebuild their dwellings and towns. The words of our text imply that it should be a pleasure to them to exercise the powers of body and mind in the interest of restoration.

But the words of the text are also, and chiefly, to be spiritually applied. The "wastes" and "desolations" referred to are of a spiritual nature. The land in which they exist is the heart of man, which at

one time was like a paradise. God had made man in His own image. Man was then perfectly holy and righteous. His knowledge of God and of all things holy was perfect and one of extreme bliss. Milk and honey then flowed in the land of man's heart, the milk and honey of God-pleasing works and virtues. There was in it not the slightest trace of desolation anywhere. And man enjoyed the fruits of it.

But Satan came, robbed man of the vesture of his holiness, took from him his spiritual wealth, bound him with the fetters of sin, and led him away into captivity. And man's heart, once an Eden, became a waste like unto that surrounding the Dead Sea. Not a spear of righteousness would henceforth grow upon it, but only thorns and thistles and obnoxious weeds. The houses and cities of its former virtues lay utterly in ruins. And it was a desolation destined to be one "of many generations." Had its restoration been left to man himself, it would never have been accomplished.

But God had compassion with man. His love for man prompted Him to send His only-begotten Son into the world to bring about a change. Jesus came and conquered Satan, who held men captive, broke the fetters of sin that held them bound, and then began to proclaim to them their freedom, a liberty to be enjoyed by all who would receive His message in faith. It was then that God's image in man, so utterly ruined by the Fall, began to be restored, and the spiritual wastes of his heart reclaimed, a restoration and reclamation finally to be fully realized in heaven. Thus Christ Himself became the Leader in the task of rebuilding the desolations of many generations and of causing the wastes of the human heart to produce again fruits of righteousness, however imperfect these still may be.

And in our text we have the promise that all those who receive His Gospel shall be fellow-builders with Him. They, as His priests and ministers, shall take up His message of liberation and bear it out into the world in order that still greater and ever greater territories of spiritual wastes may be reclaimed for man's benefit and enjoyment and to the glory of God.

And remember, it is Christ who assigns the task and makes the promise. Thus we are assured of success in the work. The Gospel we preach and cause to be proclaimed through our missionary activities shall achieve results, shall turn wastes into fruitful gardens, and restore virtues on the place of their former ruins. Christ says in our text: "Ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves." Gentiles, people who are yet distant from God, who may be as strange to us as the Babylonians were to the Jews, who differ from us in nationality, mode of living, and perhaps even in color of skin, shall by our efforts be reclaimed for God. And whatever these Gentiles possessed before their conversion,

their knowledge and wealth, with the exception of those things only which marked them as Gentiles, shall come into the Church with them and shall by them, together with us, be applied to the furtherance of the Church and the glory of God. "Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks," says Christ, "and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vine-dressers." Those who formerly opposed God's builders and oppressed them shall now, also converted, become their servants. Together with those who won them for Christ they shall engage in building and raising up and repairing the desolation of many generations. In divers ways even the enemies themselves must expedite the work.

Behold, friends, what the Gospel of Jesus will do for those who receive it! It will make of them priests and ministers of God; it will make them builders in and of His kingdom. Are there any among us at this time who are not yet so distinguished, but would like to be? There is only this that we can tell them: Hear the soul-saving message of Jesus as it comes to you in the Gospel and as it is proclaimed from this pulpit. It alone can transform the desolation of your heart into a delightful garden of God, into a fruitful valley of faith, love, hope, and devotion; it alone can induce you to consecrate yourselves to the service of God and man in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." Amen.

IS. 61, 7—9.

Our text contains wonderful words of promise. He who speaks these words is the same who says in the first verse of the chapter from which the text is taken: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings," thus establishing His identity and presenting His credentials. It is He who by virtue of His deity and authority has a right to give such promises and the necessary power to fulfil them. It is the Lord God Himself who has revealed Himself to the world in Jesus Christ.

And this is the promise: "I will make an everlasting covenant with them," namely, with My people. Accordingly, let us consider at this time:—

THE LORD'S COVENANT WITH HIS PEOPLE.

1. *Its nature;*
2. *Its foundation;*
3. *Its duration.*

1.

What is a covenant? What is the nature of the covenant the Lord promises to make with His people? These questions call for an answer.

Properly, a covenant is a compact, an agreement, between man and man, either between tribes or nations or between individuals, in which each party binds himself to fulfil certain conditions and is promised certain advantages. In our text the term "covenant" is used in its improper sense, meaning a compact such as God makes with man. Since man is not in the position of an independent covenanting party over against God, such an agreement is not strictly a mutual compact, but merely a gracious promise on the part of God to bestow upon man this or that blessing under certain conditions and at a time of His own choosing. The conditions, too, are of His own making. In a covenant which God makes with men, men themselves have no voice. "I will make," says the Lord, "I will make an everlasting covenant with them." The "I" is emphatic.

What, then, is the nature of the promised covenant? Our text reads: "For your shame ye shall have double, and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion; therefore in their land they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be unto them."

These words were first spoken to the Jews. They convey a promise of temporal blessings and joys which should be theirs upon their return from their captivity in Babylon to their own country. During the seventy years of their captivity the Jews endured great sorrows. They were the servants of their enemies, the Gentiles. That was the "shame" of God's people. Then there was "confusion." Deprived of their earthly possessions and freedom, they were sad and much grieved. In the 137th Psalm we hear them say: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion."

But now, upon their return to their own country, it was to be different. Instead of shame there was to be honor. We read in the last verse of our text: "And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles and their offspring among the people; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." Their wealth also should be returned to them, to each his "portion." Briefly, for all they suffered and endured in captivity they were then to be doubly blessed.

Nor was this to be all. The Lord adds: "I will direct their work in truth." There would be work for them to do upon their return to their country, much and difficult work. There would be the "old wastes" to rebuild, the "desolations of many generations" to reclaim, and many ruined cities and dwellings to repair—an enormous task. But they should not despair. The Lord Himself would direct the work and help them to carry it on to completion.

That, my friends, was the nature of the covenant which the Lord made with the Jews touching their *temporal* welfare and happiness upon their return from captivity. When, however, the Lord says in

the text: "*Everlasting joy shall be unto them,*" we know that He has in mind more than mere temporal happiness and earthly prosperity, and that the promise is given to others besides the Jews. Indeed, the promise is meant for God's *spiritual* Israel. The text refers to the time when the Messiah would come to free all men from the bondage of Satan, sin, and the Law, and when men by the preaching of the Gospel and through Baptism would be returned to the land of their inheritance, God's Kingdom of Grace, or the Church. What misery there is where the soul is held in bondage, what "shame," what "confusion"! Men are conceived and born in sin; they are spiritually dead and blind, deprived of their con-created righteousness and inclined toward all that is evil. Such were the Christians before their conversion.

But as Christians, the promise says, it shall be different with them. There shall be freedom instead of bondage, faith and confidence in the Lord instead of unbelief and despair, beauty instead of filth, supreme joy instead of sadness and tears. Returned to the fold of Christ, each shall have and enjoy his portion of the righteousness of Christ through faith in the Redeemer. Instead of dishonor there shall now be renown for Jesus' sake. They shall be known as priests and ministers of the Lord. V. 6. There shall be work for them to do, glorious work, the building and expanding of Christ's kingdom on earth. Insufficient in strength and wisdom for this task themselves, they shall know that the Lord Himself will engage in the work with them, supervise and bless it. Thus they shall rejoice in the knowledge that the Lord is ever on their side as the great Helper in every need.

My friends, what a wonderful covenant the Lord has made with His people! It is the covenant of the New Testament. He has made it also with you if you are a Christian. When you were baptized in the name of the Triune God, you were received into communion with Him. Then and there you were by the grace of God returned to the land which, before the beginning of your spiritual captivity through the Fall of Adam, was your home country. Then and there your captivity in the kingdom of Satan and sin, your shame, your confusion, your spiritual destitution, had ended. From that time on, the blessings enumerated in the text were yours to be enjoyed by you. And will you not thank the Lord for the glorious covenant which He has made with you? Will you not serve Him in gratitude all your days?

2.

Perhaps you doubt the truth of the promise contained in the text. If so, let me tell you that it is the Lord, the eternal Truth, who makes it. And God cannot lie. Perhaps you consider yourself unworthy of it and for that reason cannot believe that it was meant for you. True, you are not worthy of such a favor as this at the

hands of God. Neither am I. And yet, here it is for all men who will receive it.

God is a just God. In our text He states: "I, the Lord, love judgment; I hate robbery for burnt offering." When the Lord made this covenant with men, He did not violate His justice, He was neither unfair with Himself nor with them. He cannot be. The psalmist says: "The Word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done in truth." God's justice has ever been exercised in full. When we, because of the fact that we lent our ear to Satan, were led away into spiritual captivity, shame, and confusion and God permitted it, it was but just that it should be so. It would be folly to say that God might have prevented this awful plight to befall us in spite of our sins. Had He done so, He would have denied His justice, which demanded retribution for the sinner, spiritual, temporal death. He had said: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." These are the words of Him who "loves judgment" and who will ever do, in every case, what is right. When God condemns the sinner, it is His justice that prompts Him to do so.

And, now, when God again receives the sinner into His Kingdom of Grace that, too, is only just and right. But how is this possible? Is there not a contradiction here? Not at all. Besides being just, God is Love. His marvelous love for man induced Him to send His only-begotten Son into the world in order that He, as man's Substitute, should suffer for man the penalty of his sins. The Son willingly and cheerfully complied with the Father's wishes. On Calvary the Son of God, whom we know as Jesus Christ, atoned for the sins of the world, led captivity captive, and freed us, thus reconciling us again to God. Since our penalty has been paid in full by His own Son, God is now in justice bound to receive us again unto Himself. And thus the covenant promised in the text to God's people is in every way a just one. In making it, God is true to Himself, and He is true to man. Let no one think that, because he was not asked, because he had no voice in the making of this covenant, the proposition is unfair to him. To do so would be to forfeit its blessings. God, who is Justice personified and who hates injustice in man and condemns it severely,—"I hate robbery for burnt offering," He says in our text,—will never do anything to man that is not absolutely right.

Thus we see, my friends, that the covenant promised in our text has a firm foundation. It rests on the rock of Justice and Truth. Let no one, therefore, question God's motives. Human nature, which is so apt to hold God responsible for its misery, unjustly so, may even raise questions here that reflect on God's justice. I say "*may* raise." The chances are it will not; for it rarely does when the things it receives from God are good things. The new man in the Christian, however, far from being skeptical,

will receive with profound joy a covenant with promises so overwhelming as those named in the text, especially since it is based on the judgment of the benevolent God. — The believer will be exceedingly happy, finally, also because of the fact that this covenant is of endless duration.

3.

The Lord says: "I will make an *everlasting* covenant with them." Again: "*Everlasting* joy shall be unto them." Do you hear, my friends? God's covenant with His people, the one mentioned in our text, the covenant of joy, is one that shall never end. The blessings held forth therein shall be enjoyed here in this life and in the life to come, to all eternity.

God had previously made other covenants with men. There is the one to which the rainbow bears witness and which says that never again while the earth remains shall there be another flood such as the one at Noah's time which destroyed all flesh with the exception of those creatures that had been taken into the ark. Wonderful as it is, this covenant holds out to man only temporal blessings, and there will be no need for it after the Last Day. Then there was the Covenant of Circumcision, which God made with Abraham and his posterity. This covenant contained spiritual blessings, but its duration was not endless. After nineteen hundred years its validity passed away. It was not intended for Abraham's spiritual descendants of the time of the New Testament.

Here, however, in our text, we have the Lord's covenant for His New Testament believers. It is the last, the greatest and grandest of them all. Once entered into, it shall never be broken on the part of God. Man may break it and thus lose its blessings, but God will ever remain true to His word. Although the Bible says that Christ will deny before His heavenly Father those who deny Him here, it also states in another place: "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

My dear friends, in Holy Baptism God made this covenant with you. There He washed away your guilt, received you into kinship with Himself as His dear child, clothed you in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and now assures you that He will never, never, not in all eternity, remove you from His presence. This covenant stands on the rock of divine Justice, a Justice which flamed forth on Calvary for your redemption and was satisfied. If you wander away from God, He will yet follow you with the Word of His grace, ever ready to take you back. And oh, what joy there will be in His presence when the prodigal son or daughter returns! Oh, how happy we all should be for such a covenant, a covenant of joy, founded on the rock of Justice, and one of endless duration! God grant, for Jesus' sake, that we may appreciate it! Amen.

Stewardson, Ill.

C. T. SPITZ.

Outlines on Free Texts.

1 PET. 4, 10.

The Christian is justified by faith in Jesus Christ. This Savior becomes the new Principle in his life; and because he has life in Christ, his faith begets works. There can be no inactivity and sluggishness. Jas. 2, 17; Rom. 12, 11. Christianity is not a mere formality, existing in name only; it is a call to labor in the vineyard. Matt. 20, 1ff.

THE CHRISTIAN AT WORK.

Let us note

1. *The source of his strength;*
2. *The field of his labor;*
3. *The quality of his service.*

1.

Every Christian possesses his share of gifts, or talents, physical, intellectual, and spiritual. If he would but contemplate a little, he would find that he is richly endowed.

The gifts, *charismata*, mentioned in our text, however, are special gifts. They are enumerated v. 11; Rom. 12, 6ff.; 1 Cor. 12, 4ff. There is no Christian whose hands have been left empty, and who has been denied his share of these gifts. Text: "every man." These gifts are "manifold," not only many in number, but also variegated and diversified, like many different jewels or the different colors in the rainbow. Each Christian has his own special gifts. One has more than another. One has this gift; another, some other gift. One has one talent; another, five; still another, ten.

All of these abilities and qualities which the Christian calls his own, especially the latter, are "gifts"; they have been "received." The grace of God is the source. Justification is the free gift of God, Rom. 5, 15f., but likewise these graces. Hence, the source of the Christian's strength is God's grace.

Remembering that God is the secret of his strength, the Christian will always feel his dependence when at his work in the Kingdom and call upon God for an outpouring of His plentiful grace.

2.

The field of labor described: "Even so minister the same one to another." Christians are members of one another, Rom. 12, 4f.; and "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal," 1 Cor. 12, 7. All things should be done to the edifying of the brethren. 1 Cor. 14, 26; Rom. 15, 2. Every member of the household of God should strive to impart to the numerous other members spiritual knowledge, increase of faith, growth in good works, etc.

These gifts, whether ordinary or special, are used by the Christian for the good of mankind in general. He is a salt of this earth and a light of the world at all times. He is "a sweet savor of Christ," "a savor of life unto life" unto them that are saved. 2 Cor. 2, 15f.

This is a vast field of labor. The debt of love is never paid in full. Rom. 13, 8. The Christian, therefore, will find it self-evident that he is always kept busy. There is enough to do for every single member in the kingdom of God.

3.

The quality of service is described by the term "good stewards." As such, Christians will be faithful in every sense of the word. If they have but one talent, they will be just as devoted in the performance of their duties as if they had five or even ten.

As good stewards, Christians will serve in gratitude to God, who has bestowed these gifts upon them, knowing that if God's mercy had not drawn them, they still would be unsaved and standing idly by, no, be active in destroying God's kingdom. They will never labor as if they were granting something which nobody could expect of them.

They will serve humbly. Their endowments will never cause them to be proud and to assert their superiority over others. 1 Cor. 4, 7; Rom. 12, 3; Jer. 9, 23f.; 1 Cor. 1, 31; 2 Cor. 11, 17.

They will serve painstakingly and thoroughly, bearing in mind that they must give an account of their stewardship. The humblest and plainest duties will be performed with the greatest care as in the presence of the Lord.

They will serve wisely and circumspectly. Zeal is good, but let it be according to knowledge. Rom. 10, 2. Fleshly zeal will do more damage than good, even though it may appear to be very religious.

They will serve unstintingly and uncomplainingly. Never will they imagine that they have done their full duty and that no more can be expected of them. They will never serve in a mercenary spirit. Matt. 19, 27. "Freely ye have received, freely give." Matt. 10, 8. The glory of God will be their aim. Cp. v. 11.

As good stewards they will strive to improve and to grow in Christ unto all good works. They will not neglect the gift that is in them, 1 Tim. 4, 14, but stir it up, 2 Tim. 1, 6.

Conclusion. Note Luke 12, 42—44.

B.

1 JOHN 3, 1—3.

a. "Therefore the world knoweth us not." These words of the text explain the unfriendly attitude of worldlings toward God's children. They know not (*acknowledge* not) the followers of Christ

as the beloved of God; for this reason they hate and persecute the believers, so that these must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Acts 14, 22. b. Because of such tribulation of the world, the devil, and their own flesh (sin), believers often *do not know themselves*, that is, do not acknowledge themselves God's beloved children. Is. 49, 14; Ps. 42, 10; Rom. 7, 23, 24. c. It is for this reason that God's Word is so full of comfort: Is. 40, 1, 2; 49, 13, 15, 16; assuring us that we *are* God's children (text: "Beloved, now *are* we the sons of God") and setting before us time and again our *Christian hope*. Let us consider

THE HOPE OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN.

It is

1. *A most blessed hope;*
2. *A most certain hope;*
3. *A most profitable hope.*

1.

A. *A most blessed hope.* a. Also the children of this world entertain hopes. Pope: "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." Carlyle: "Man is, properly speaking, based upon hope; he has no other possession but hope; this world of his is emphatically the place of hope." But, alas, how empty are the hopes of sinful man! Sinful, unregenerate man hopes for riches, distinction, happiness. Are these hopes realized? Victor Hugo: "Hope is a delusion; no hand can grasp a wave or a shadow." What a terrible confession! b. The Christian has a most blessed hope. Text, v. 3: "Every man that hath *this hope*." There is a certain hope which certain men have, namely, the beloved of God. V. 1. This hope is not fixed upon earthly treasures, but upon heavenly blessings; it is a heavenly hope. Text: "When He shall appear." Heb. 13, 14; Phil. 3, 20. In our text the apostle describes the Christian hope. Let us consider it in detail.

B. *The nature of this hope.* a. The Christian hope is twofold. Text: "We shall be like Him." What does that mean? 1) We shall be revealed as the *sons of God*. V. 2. Already in this life Christians through faith *are* the adopted sons of God; but on account of the sinful flesh this is hidden. Rom. 8, 23, 24. When the Lord will appear, God will present us publicly as His dear children. Col. 1, 22. 2) We shall be like Him in *holiness* and *perfection*. Phil. 3, 21. (Amplify.) 3) We shall be like Him in *triumph*. 2 Tim. 2, 12; Is. 66, 22—24; Phil. 2, 2—12. 4) We shall be like Him in *glory*. Text: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Here we are crucified with Christ; there we shall be crowned with His glory. Luke 23, 43; Rev. 14, 13; Rom. 8, 18; John 17, 24; Ps. 16, 11; 1 Cor. 15, 40—44. Interpret these passages and expound their

glorious meaning. b. "We shall *see* Him as He is." 1) We shall see Him as the exalted Lord. John 17, 24. 2) We shall see Him as the Conqueror of all His and our foes. Ps. 110, 1; Matt. 22, 44; Heb. 10, 12. 13. 3) We shall see Him in the revealed majesty of His eternal Godhead. 1 Cor. 15, 22—28. 4) This seeing of God is a *beatific vision*, in which the elect saints find their sweetest bliss. 1 Cor. 15, 53—57; Job 19, 25—27; Ps. 42, 5; Matt. 5, 8; Ps. 16, 11.

C. *Application*. What a blessed hope! Summarize the contents of the Christian hope. Rom. 5, 2. — However, can we be sure that this hope will not deceive us?

2.

A. The Christian hope is a most *certain* hope. Text: "*We know*." This St. John wrote by divine inspiration. Hence it was a knowledge based upon God's own Word, which cannot fail. Matt. 24, 35. a. The Christian hope is absolutely certain because it is based upon God's infallible and irrevocable *promise*. 2 Thess. 2, 16: "Hath given us . . . *good hope through grace*." Ps. 9, 19. b. The Christian hope is absolutely certain because it is based upon God's *love*. Text: "What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." This love toward us is revealed 1) in God's eternal predestination. Eph. 1, 3—5: "unto the adoption of children"; Rom. 8, 28—30; 2) in God's gift of His Son, John 3, 16; 2 Cor. 5, 21; 3) in God's adoption of us as His dear children (text: "that we should be *called* the sons of God"; "*we are* the sons of God"); Eph. 5, 25—27; 2 Tim. 1, 9; Titus 3, 5; 4) in God's promise to keep us in faith unto life everlasting, 1 Cor. 10, 13; 2 Tim. 4, 18; 5) in God's loving act of implanting the Christian hope in our hearts, Eph. 4, 4 ("called in one hope"); 1 Pet. 1, 3, 13; Heb. 10, 13; Titus 2, 13.

B. *Application*. How sure is this hope! a. It is based upon God's express Word and promise. b. It is based upon God's predestinating, redeeming, sanctifying, sustaining, hope-inspiring love. Surely He will love us "unto the end." John 13, 1; Rom. 8, 37.

3.

A. The Christian hope is a most *profitable* hope. a. Earthly hopes are so many vanities. Cowley: "Hope is fortune's cheating lottery, where for one prize a hundred blanks there be." b. Not so is the Christian hope. 1) The Christian hope gives comfort in all trials and afflictions of life. Text: "*We know* we shall be like Him." What comfort! "*We know* that we shall see Him." O sweetest consolation! Job 19, 25—27; Acts 2, 26; Rom. 5, 4, 5; 12, 12; 2 Cor. 3, 12; Rom. 15, 13. 2) The Christian hope urges and impels the believer to *follow after holiness*. Text: "Every man that hath this hope in him *purifieth* himself." Phil. 3, 12—15; 1 Tim. 6, 11, 12; Heb. 12, 1—17.

B. Indeed, the Christian hope is most profitable. Let us, then, rejoice in this hope, gratefully acknowledge the love which has given it to us, and serve God with joyful hearts, until there will appear what we shall be and we shall see our loving God as He is, in eternal glory. Rom. 8, 25.

St. Louis, Mo.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER.

MATT. 24, 13.

Before we close the series of discussions on the doctrines of the Creed, it is important that we meditate

ON FINAL PERSEVERANCE.

1. *Final perseverance is absolutely necessary to obtain eternal salvation.*
2. *How is final perseverance effected?*

1.

a. To have begun the Christian life is a great privilege. For the ungodly, whose conscience at times stings as the poison of scorpions, who is without God and without hope in the world, to have just one day of the life that is in Christ Jesus, with all the peace and joy and hope there to be found, would be a most delightful experience. We have been granted such a season of refreshing. Baptism. Christian rearing. Confirmation. Special gracious visitations. To live in the state of grace is a glorious existence.

Yet, if we endure not unto the end, we shall be lost. It is not enough that the ship sail the sea and go down in full view of the harbor; it must make port. What a pity to see a promising tree loaded with fruit hewn down in midsummer! If you are compelled to leap across a yawning chasm to save your life, it will spell disaster and sure death unless you leap all the way. Many have begun in the spirit and ended in the flesh.

To be lost means to be exiled from communion with God, to be cast away from the face of God. Matt. 5, 41; 8, 12. It means to be doomed to eternal punishment. Matt. 25, 46; 2 Thess. 1, 9; Matt. 18, 8; Mark 3, 29. It means to endure the torments of damnation. Rom. 2, 9; Luke 16, 23f.; Mark 9, 43f.; Matt. 8, 12; 13, 50.

b. To be saved is the goal of our existence. To be saved means forever to behold the unveiled face of God, face to face; to be eternally in communion with Him, the Fountainhead of all peace and of every blessing. As a consequence glorified man according to body and soul will radiate and glow with the lambent glory of the adorable God. 1 John 3, 2. — Salvation is the complete deliverance from every evil, 2 Tim. 4, 18; Rev. 7, 16f.; 21, 4; and the experiencing of unspeakable joys, 1 Pet. 1, 8; Ps. 16, 11; John 17, 24. —

Imagery: wedding, Matt. 25, 10; Rev. 19, 9; banquet, Matt. 8, 11; Luke 13, 29; sitting on thrones, Luke 22, 30.

Final perseverance is absolutely necessary to obtain this eternal salvation. Text: "He . . . the same," etc., no other. Matt. 10, 22; Mark 13, 13; Heb. 3, 6; Rev. 2, 10.

2.

a. If we do not persevere, endure to the end, the fault is ours. If we fall from the state of grace, it is due to our guilty neglecting, or trifling with, the means of grace and to our wilful resistance of the Holy Spirit's work in us. Unbelief and damnation are the inevitable results. Warning: "To-day . . . harden not your hearts." Ps. 95, 8. Remember Lot's wife! Gen. 19, 17.

b. If we endure to the end, we cannot take credit for this final perseverance, for anything that we do or merit.

The false view of Calvinism. Faith is loss-proof, immune against even malicious and enormous sins. Relying on past experience of faith. The case of Cromwell. (Pieper, *Dogmatik*, III, 107ff. Note.)

The false view of synergism: The cause of final perseverance lies in man, in his surrendering of wilful resistance, personal determination, proper conduct, relation, cooperation, will power, moral activity. To rely on our good intentions, determinations, works, or even faith for final perseverance is always a deceptive, dangerous, fatal recipe. Simon Peter tried it with disastrous results. Mark 14, 29f.; cf. v. 71.

c. Our final perseverance must be based entirely and solely on the grace of God as it is assured us in His Word and in the Sacraments. Phil. 2, 13: "For it is God," etc.; 1 Pet. 3—5; Phil. 1, 6; 1 Thess. 5, 24; 2 Thess. 3, 3; John 10, 28—30.

Base your hope of final perseverance and salvation entirely on the grace of God. To God all glory, not only in the doctrine of conversion, justification, redemption, but also in the doctrine of final perseverance.

Cleveland, O.

H. W. BARTELS.

PS. 145, 18. 19.

The 145th Psalm has aptly been called "the Te Deum of the Old Testament." In this superb hymn David extols the greatness of God (vv. 2—6), His tender mercies (vv. 7—10), and the glory and righteousness of His government (vv. 11—13. 17). Verily, an unsearchably great and glorious King is Jehovah, our God!—Behold a mighty work, a standing miracle of this great King: the constant supplying of all living creatures with necessary food—throughout the ages since creation! Vv. 15. 16.—But the most valuable portion of this psalm are the last verses: 14. 18—20. This King of kings

deigns to listen to the petitions of His humble children and to answer their cry in the hour of need. What a precious privilege is ours as "saints of God in Christ Jesus"! Yet how prone we are to neglect or even completely forget the blessed privilege of prayer! Our text, in the language of absolute assurance, reinforced by David's personal experience, invites us to ponder anew the true nature of prayer, its spirit, and its blessed prospects.

THE ACCEPTABLE PRAYER.

1. *Its nature and spirit;*
2. *Its confident prospects.*

1.

What is prayer? (Cat., Qu. 208.) While all of Psalm 145 is a hymn of praise and thanksgiving, yet in our text David is speaking of God's attitude toward petitionary prayer. Such prayers are prompted by our needs and wants, both bodily and spiritual, caused by Satan, the world, and our perverted heart. Cp. the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer. We take our needs to God in prayer, not merely because He has commanded us to pray, but because we know that He alone is able to give us all that we ask for.

a) Hence David speaks of those who *call upon* the Lord *in truth, i. e.*, in perfect sincerity and with earnest desire. Jas. 5, 16b (lit. transl.). As the believer's entire worship is in spirit and in truth, so are certainly his supplications. Cp. John 4, 23, 24. The sincere suppliant does not pray with thoughtless perfunctoriness, Is. 29, 13; Ezek. 33, 31; Matt. 15, 8, 9a; 6, 7, or in self-righteous hypocrisy, Matt. 6, 5; Luke 18, 11, 12, but his entreaty is the "call" of a heart needing God, a sincere "desire" of, a "cry" for, *divine* help and deliverance. Cp., *e. g.*, Luke 18, 13.—This first requisite contains a solemn reminder to all formalists that mere formal prayer "does not lessen the distance between God and man, but rather augments it." A hypocrite, in prayer, has never understood how a saint's heart and flesh can cry out for the living God. Ps. 84, 2b.

David's "in truth," while primarily opposed to insincerity in prayer, also reminds us of "*the prayer of faith*" and of strong confidence in God's assurance over against the doubting, vacillating, wavering heart in prayer. Cf. Jas. 1, 5—8; 5, 15; Matt. 21, 22; Mark 11, 24; 1 John 5, 14 ("confidence"). 15 ("*we know*").

b) The second requisite of an acceptable prayer is that the suppliant "fear God." V. 19. The "fear of the Lord" is a phrase often found in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalter; cf. Ps. 19, 9; 111, 10; Job 28, 28, meaning reverential trust with hatred of evil, the idea of tormenting, torturing terror and dark and deadening dread being completely excluded because incompatible with love. 1 John 4, 18. Those who fear God are identical with "all they that love Him," in v. 20. The attitude of the child of God in prayer is one of deep and sincere reverence, of humble obedience, of filial

devotion, of a keen sense of the undeserved condescension on God's part. How could a mere sinful mortal approach God in any other frame of mind if his God is the righteous and compassionate King described in vv. 3—13! This humble spirit produces a prayer which breathes reverence both in form and content.

Application. When the hour of trial and temptation, the day of trouble and distress, come upon you, and come they will, do not submit to dark and gloomy doubts, the end of which is despair, but in order that you may stand in the evil day, Eph. 6, 13, call upon God sincerely, with your whole heart, and cry to Him with filial, prayerful devotion. Phil. 4, 6.

2.

If we pray and implore God in our need according to the manner which he prescribes, what are our prospects for an answer?

a) David assures us — and it is the assurance of abundant experience — that “*the Lord is nigh*” unto all them that call upon Him in truth. God, the mighty King, full of compassion, draws near, is near, to *all* those who draw near to Him in prayer. Note this remarkable mutual approach between the exalted God and the humble worshiper in prayer. God, who is always at all places (Ps. 139, 1—16), makes His gracious and helpful presence felt to the sincere man of prayer. Ps. 34, 18a; Phil. 4, 5; Jas. 4, 8.

b) “He will fulfil the desire” (lit.: *He will do, perform, the pleasure*) “of them that fear Him.” Is it possible that the almighty and unsearchably great King (vv. 3—6) will do my pleasure, will fulfil my desire, especially when I am in need, in trouble? Here is the mystery of prayer. God, whose will is sovereign and supreme, gives us the assurance that He will deign to do the pleasure of sincere and reverent supplicants. While our mind, in pondering this mystery, exclaims: Ps. 139, 16, our soul craves God's presence and the fulfilment of our desires, which we know to be *according to His will* (1 John 5, 14) and cries out with indescribable longing: Mark 9, 24. Yea, as it was Jesus' principal censure of His disciples while He was sojourning here on earth, so it is undoubtedly to-day: “O ye of little faith!” Matt. 6, 30; 8, 26; 14, 31; 16, 8, etc. As if aware of the doubts of our petty heart, David assures us of divine help a third time if we pray aright.

c) *He will hear their cry.* Jehovah, whose greatness is unsearchable, will hear the cry of His children, the cry of repentance, for forgiveness, for salvation. While hard-hearted men find it difficult to forgive their fellow-men's trespasses, the thrice holy God, gracious and compassionate, is ever ready to forgive us our trespasses for Jesus' sake if we cry to Him with a contrite heart. He hears us when we cry to Him in our spiritual and physical distress, and according to His own promise (Ps. 50, 15) He answers it and

d) *Will save us*, will deliver us from sin, eternal death, if we call upon Him. Rom. 10, 13. Yea, "the Lord *preserveth* all them that love Him." V. 20. He "upholdeth all that fall and raiseth up all those that be bowed down." V. 14. Cf. Ps. 37, 23, 24. Peter's fall and repentance. While every Christian's afflictions are many, — many of them known only to himself and God, — for: Acts 14, 22, the Lord delivers him out of them all, Ps. 34, 19, if not in this^e life, surely in the life to come, Rev. 21, 4. Until then, if it be His will, we shall endure affliction. But God is faithful; He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, etc. 1 Cor. 10, 13; Heb. 2, 18; Ps. 34, 17, 18.

Conclusion. Such are the prospects of acceptable prayers. How sure and reliable is the guarantee given us in our text and elsewhere in God's Word that our prayers shall be heard! Let us go from our "house of prayer" with the assurance of David in our hearts: Text.

Concordia, Mo.

O. W. WISMAR.

Literatur.

Synodalbericht des Colorado-Distrikts der Missouri-Synode. 1925. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Preis: 40 Cts.

Die Präsidialrede und das Referat, beide von Präses D. Rüssenhop, haben im eminentesten Sinne Jesum Christum zum Zentrum; denn der Rede liegt 1 Kor. 1, 30 zugrunde, und das Referat handelt von der Person Jesu Christi. Der Distrikt will an Hand der gedruckten Dogmatik D. F. Piepers der Reihe nach die Hauptlehren des göttlichen Wortes behandeln. Es ist zweifelsohne sehr nötig und sehr ersprießlich, daß wir fort und fort Lehre treiben. Wir meinen, die Warnung vor reformiertem Material (S. 37) sollte beherzigt werden; dann würde es nicht passieren, daß man eine Predigt von Talmage benutzt, in der er das Geheimnis von der Versöhnung durch das Gottesblut Christi nach menschlicher Denkweise höchst plausibel zu machen sucht. B.

Synodalbericht des Michigan-Distrikts der Missouri-Synode. 1925. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Preis: 35 Cts.

P. G. F. Otte, der in den deutschen Lehrverhandlungen über den Artikel von der Vergebung der Sünden referierte, betonte eingangs, daß diese Lehre ein Glaubensartikel sei, über den man sich keine eigenen Gedanken machen dürfe, wenn man ihn nicht seines Schriftinhalts entleeren wolle. Wir können dem modernen Menschen nicht zur Seligkeit helfen, wenn wir ihm durch eine Rechtfertigung vor dem Forum der Vernunft die Geheimnisse des göttlichen Wortes recht süß zu machen trachten. Der Referent handelte darum nach der 1 Petr. 4, 11 gegebenen Generalregel. Aus eben diesem Grunde befriedigt auch das englische Referat von P. A. F. Bernthal: "Why Should We Continue Steadfast in Believing and Teaching the Inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures?" Die Berichte der Missionskommission einschließlich über die Studentenmission in Ann Arbor und über die Kirchbautafel, die ein Reinvermögen von \$108,183 aufweist, und der Schulbehörde zeugen von einer Entfaltung reger Tätigkeit dieses Distrikts, und ähnliche Kommissionen anderer Distrikte werden diese Berichte mit Freude lesen. B.

Proceedings of the Eighteenth Convention of the Oregon and Washington District of the Missouri Synod. 1925. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Price, 15 cts.

The essayist, Rev. C. J. Beyerlein, presented the theme: "The Christian Day-school an Excellent Missionary Institute." We may surmise with what undivided interest the brethren of this District followed the

presentation of this timely subject from these words of the essayist: "Our schools, both in Oregon and Washington, have been face to face with the question of to be or not to be. By the grace of God we have thus far survived the crisis." Every thoughtful Christian will wish these harassed brethren further success in their valiant fight for their schools. B.

Elementary Bible History. Following the Words of Holy Scripture. With colored illustrations, maps, notes, Scripture- and Catechism-passages. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. 218 pages, $5\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{3}{4}$. Price, \$1.00.

This book meets a need and serves a purpose most admirably. The children, without question, will be delighted, when turning its pages, in scanning the most exquisitely prepared full-page, four-color illustrations and even on account of them will feel compelled to read those sacred stories. The footnotes, the syllabication and accentuation of proper nouns in the text, the quotations from Luther's Small Catechism for each lesson, and other features make this book a very handy tool for the teacher. It contains a hundred stories, fifty from each of the two Testaments. The editors, Superintendents A. C. Stellhorn and Theo. Kuehnert, as well as the publishers merit a wide dissemination of this very useful and most attractive book. B.

Plain Sermons on Portions from the Old and New Testament Scriptures. By *J. H. Hartenberger*, Pastor of St. John's Ev. Luth. Church, Red Bud, Ill. With a Greeting to the Reader by *Prof. W. H. T. Dau*, D. D. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Price, \$3.25.

Rev. John Ker, D. D., *Lectures on the History of Preaching*, in concluding his lectures on the pre-Reformation period, urges his students (p. 145): "Let me only hope . . . that you will make it your endeavor to declare simply, faithfully, and earnestly the Word of eternal life." In his next lecture, Ker refers to Luther at length and says (p. 157): "In regard to style, Luther is never weary of insisting on the necessity for clearness and simplicity. Everything in regard to division and expression ends in this — Have the people understood me? Can they carry this away in order to apply it?" Pastor Hartenberger's sermons meet this requirement of clarity to a nicety. His exposition of God's Word is clear, natural, and direct. Pastors will profit from the study of the same. The volume contains sixty-three sermons. B.

Amerikanischer Kalender fuer deutsche Lutheraner auf das Jahr 1926.

Lutheran Annual 1926. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Price of each, 15 cts.

We wish that our principal religious papers were as widely circulated as these two publications have been in the past and, we hope, will be in the future. B.

Mehr Acht auf die Kinder!

More Attention to the Children! Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. Price of each tract: Single copies, 4 cts.; dozen, 30 cts.

Superintendent Stellhorn, in a God-pleasing way, reminds Christian parents of their great obligations which they owe to their children before God. The tract will serve an excellent purpose in the homes of members of our Church and of non-members. B.

Evolution. The Answers of Eminent Scientists. Gathered during thirty years by *William Dallmann*. Fourth edition. Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, Wis. Price: Single copies, 15 cts.; dozen, \$1.44; 100, \$10.00.

A timely new edition of an excellent pamphlet. That evolution has not received the unanimous endorsement of great thinkers and scientists is here proved by quotations from their writings or by other reliable data which the distinguished author has unearthed and collected. The eighty pages of the little work offer a surprisingly large amount of helpful and stimulating apologetic material. May it continue to find many readers! A.

